



Pick Your Path to Health

Have You Been Taken Good Care Of?

Think back to your last doctor visit.

When was it? Was it for a regular check-up?

The idea of going to the doctor may strike you as uncomfortable at first. For most Asian women, clinics are formidable places, the last place we would go unless we feel ill.

"In China, people don't go to doctor unless they feel ill," said Qin Cao. Qin is a financial analyst with a loving family and two kids. After she came to the U.S., she began visiting her doctor regularly. "I find life more enjoyable and less worrisome after regular doctor's visits."

Regular check-ups are both for you and your family. Ask yourself: When was your last appointment for a routine check-up? Did you have a mammogram in the past year? When did you have your last cholesterol test and blood pressure exam?

If your answers to the above questions are mostly no or years ago, it is time to schedule some appointments. Remember, preventive appointments are not a waste of time. These visits to the doctor can assure that you and your family are under good care. Routine physical exams will help protect you from diseases and can detect disease at an earlier stage and ultimately help save your life.

Your Health Care Matters

As Asian American women, we have a tendency to look upon the health of our family as higher than anything else. Let's rethink this—our family is depending on us to take care of them, and we must take care of ourselves. Good health care habits are not a luxury but a necessity.

If you wait until you feel ill to visit the doctor, there is a chance that an illness may be in advanced stages. Many diseases can be prevented or cured through regular check-ups. For example, mammography is the best available method to detect breast cancer in its early stages.

Sadly, in the last year, approximately two-thirds of immigrant Asian women didn't have Pap smears and roughly 70 percent have never had mammograms, according to the Office of Women's Health.

"Being a woman itself presents obstacles for Asian American women to get health care," said Suzanne Patton, Director of Development at the Family Health Center in Worcester, Massachusetts. "Women, especially Asian women, are inclined to take care of their family members and neglect their own health needs." In addition, due to the inflexible work schedules or limited childcare, many Asian American women cannot routinely visit the doctor. Issues such as financial difficulties, culture, and language differences also affect women's access to health care information.

Evidence shows that Asian women have significantly lower breast and cervical cancer screening rates than the national average. This results in high rates of breast, lung, and cervical cancers among Asian American women. The American Cancer Society estimates that, among all women, 13,000 new cases of cervical cancer will be diagnosed in 2002 and about 4,100 women will die of the disease.

Make Full Use of Your Insurance

Regular check-ups are not so costly as you may imagine. If you have insurance, whether Medicare or some other health insurance, it covers most of the cost of a mammogram and a physical exam every 12 months.

Ask your health care provider and make sure you and your family members are in good health. Take action:

- Make initial contact with your physician or healthcare provider if you have not done that yet.
- Schedule annual physical exams.
- Ask your doctor about other necessary routine checkups.
- When you make an appointment, make sure to ask for translation services if you will need them.
- If you don't understand, speak up. Ask for clarification or step-by-step directions if you need to take medications.
- To learn more about health care and insurance information, visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov>.

Get Help

"I don't have insurance, what shall I do?"

If that describes your situation, you are not alone. According to a Commonwealth Fund Survey, Asian American women are nearly twice as likely to lack health insurance as their Caucasian counterparts. Almost one-third of Asian American women reported receiving no preventive services at all.

If you are under-insured or non-insured, take advantage of services available in your community. Suzanne Patton reports that most community health centers receive federal or state funds to provide health care to people who don't have the financial resources.

Start by calling your local health centers for available screenings or referrals. If you cannot find information, check the *Yellow Pages* under the columns of "health," "social services," "hospital," and "doctors" for available programs and referrals.

You may also want to check out the local branch of the American Cancer Society (ACS). ACS has more than 3,400 local offices and provides comprehensive information on community health care programs. To get information on community breast and cervical cancer screenings, call ACS hotline 1-800-ACS-2345, or log on to its Web site at <http://www.cancer.org>.

Some other options include:

- Call your local health centers or clinic, take advantage of any preventive care services available at the clinic or offered at a partner health center.
- Look for information about community health care through health centers, public schools, social service agencies, community newspapers, or churches.
- Participate in free screenings sponsored by local health organizations.
- Attend free, health-related workshops or education sessions offered in your community.
- To learn more about what you can do to help yourself and your family gain optimum health, visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov>.

Take care of yourself. Your health is a treasure. Let your doctor be your health counselor and "detective." You will find yourself on a path to better health.

Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health education campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign, please call 1-800-994-WOMAN or 1-888-220-5446 (TDD), or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov/> To request weekly health tips by e-mail, click on the box that says, "Click Here for weekly health tips by e-mail."